

8 RECREATION AND PARKS

INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

Recreation has been defined as a basic human need that is essential for the physical and mental well-being of the individual and society; parks and recreation are an important part of community life in Watsonville. The City takes an active role in providing park and recreation services with three primary objectives:

1. The provision of parks and recreation facilities in proportion to the population of Watsonville.
2. The provision of a wide variety of recreation services to meet the needs of a diverse population.
3. The promotion and coordination of recreation programs sponsored by community organizations that utilize city facilities.

This chapter in part satisfies requirements of the Open Space Element mandated by state planning law. Policies and implementation measures are set forth to meet state requirements, address community concern, and to accomplishing the above listed objectives. The Environmental Resource Management chapter (9) addresses protection of open space and conservation of other natural resources.

COMMUNITY CONCERNS

In 1992, the City of Watsonville completed the *Parks and Open Space Master Plan*, a comprehensive study of the community's parks and recreation needs and the opportunities for acquisition and development available to the city. The Master Plan addresses concerns identified during studies conducted by the City in 1983 and 1991, and during public input processes conducted as a part of the community outreach program in 1989. The following issues were identified:

- Can the City continue to provide, develop and maintain an areawide network of neighborhood and community parks?

- Can land for parks be identified, reserved, and acquired for future park use?
- Can adequate funding sources be provided for park and recreation facilities?
- Can new private development projects be made to contribute toward the provision of public recreational facilities?
- Can joint agreements between the City and the Pajaro Valley Unified School District and other

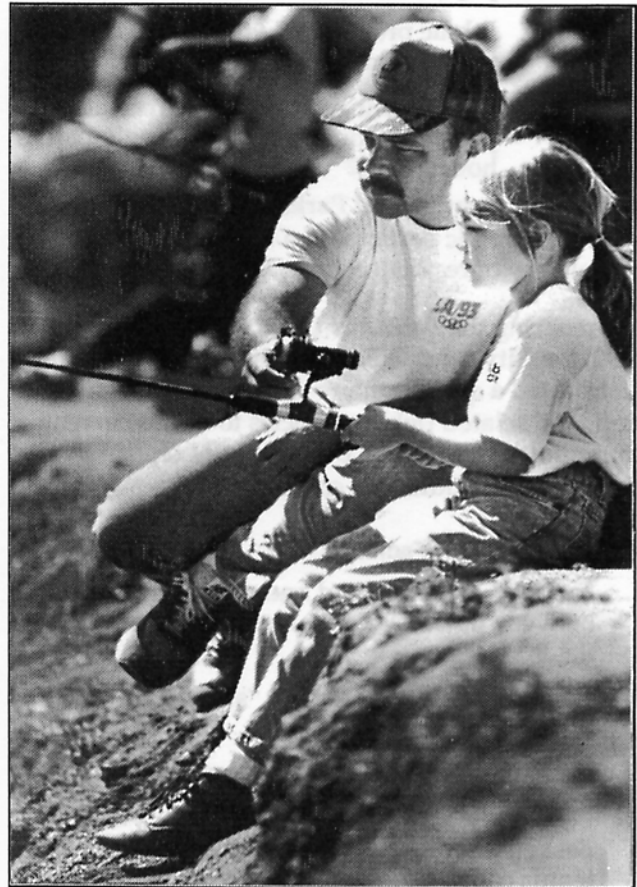


Photo: Courtesy of the Register-Pajaronian

Anglers waited patiently at the annual fishing derby at Pinto Lake City Park. The All-American Kids Fish Free Derby is sponsored by the Watsonville Recreation and Parks Department.

agencies be established to maximize the provision of neighborhood park and recreation facilities in conjunction with the development of new school sites?

- Are current park in-lieu fees adequate for maintaining existing park facilities and also acquiring new park sites?
- Are current recreation programs responsive to the diverse needs of the Watsonville population with regard to:
 - a. Safe access to park and playground facilities for the very young?
 - b. Suitable activities for the large elderly population?
 - c. Ethnic preferences of the large Hispanic population?
 - d. Convenient and affordable recreation programs for low-income, single-parent households?
- Is the Recreation and Parks Commission responsive to public participation in the design and delivery of recreation programs?

In preparing the *Parks and Open Space Master Plan* of 1992, the City conducted three public workshops and distributed a questionnaire to interested residents, staff, and related public agencies to assess current community needs. The public input helped identify the following additional concerns:

Active Recreation Facilities

1. Facilities are over-used and some conflicts occur between users. The city needs more sports fields.
2. The City should consider a "swim-gym" facility and a golf course.
3. Play areas for children are popular and heavily used.
4. Basketball courts are heavily used, while existing tennis courts seem to meet current demand and are not a high priority.

Trails

1. Residents expressed the desire for a bicycle/pedestrian trail connecting recreational facilities throughout the city.

2. Improved bicycle access to downtown is desired.
3. The Salsipuedes Creek and Pajaro River levee is currently used as a trail, although it is not officially authorized by Santa Cruz County. Portions of the levee are perceived as unsafe due to broken glass, lack of visibility, and presence of homeless people.

Recreation Programs

Residents are generally satisfied with the existing recreation programs provided by the City. The desire for programs to continue to focus on the needs of youth, with modifications to after school and day care programs if schools adopt a year-round schedule, was also expressed.

Passive Recreation/Environmental Education

Watsonville's natural wetlands provide an opportunity for limited wetland access and educational facilities such as interpretive signage, observation decks, and kiosks.

EXISTING PARK FACILITIES

Watsonville's park system consists of ten small vest pocket parks, four neighborhood parks, and two community parks. These 16 facilities occupy a total of 137 acres, and consist of 67 acres of land area and 70 acres of surface water at Pinto Lake. In addition to developed park areas, the city also has preserved as passive open space two small urban open spaces, and much of the natural drainage network provided by the Watsonville, Struve, and West Branch Struve Sloughs. The 1992 Park Inventory is shown in Figure 8-1.

City residents are fortunate in having a number of easily accessible state and county park facilities within a 20-minute drive. These recreational areas include: Nisene Marks State Park, New Brighton and Sunset State Beach and Campground, Manresa, Seacliff, Zmudowski, Moss Landing, and Salinas River State Beaches, Pinto Lake County Park, the special event facilities of the Santa Cruz County Fairgrounds, the magnificent scenery of Mt. Madonna County Park in Santa Clara County, as well as trail and bike access along the Pajaro River.

NEED FOR FUTURE PARK FACILITIES

The park classification standards shown in Figure 8-2 and the following criteria were used by the City of Watsonville in developing its plans for park and recreation needs on an areawide basis.

1. Neighborhood park facilities should be within one-half mile of all residential areas.
2. Park and recreation facility design shall include provisions for functional design and considerations for visual impact on the surrounding neighborhood.
3. Equipment and facility design shall include design considerations for all age groups and the disabled, with emphasis on facilities for children and youth.
4. Passive open space elements such as trails, wetlands and riparian corridors shall be protected from active recreation use.
5. Trails shall be provided connecting recreation facilities in the community.

In addition, Watsonville considers the following criteria when planning park facilities:

1. A sufficient amount of land for the needs of the population.
2. An appropriate geographic distribution of park and recreation facilities.
3. A variety of facilities and programs to meet the needs of all age groups, with emphasis on the needs of children and youth.
4. A preference for new neighborhood parks over vest pocket parks.

The City can assess the need for future parks and prepare guidelines for the provision of park facilities by applying the above criteria and the classification system shown in Figure 8-2 to the projected population within the city and urban limit line for the year 2005. The needed park area takes into account the provision of neighborhood facilities combined with school site development. Figure 8-3 summarizes the city's 1990 inventory of parkland and the acreages of parkland needed by 2005 to meet the city's standards. Figure 8-4 depicts the distribution of parks in 1992 and future park locations.

Figure 8-1 1992 Watsonville Park Inventory

Vest Pocket Parks	Size (Acres)
1. Atri	0.3
2. Brentwood	0.4
3. Bronte	0.3
4. City Plaza	1.4
5. Crestview	1.5
6. Flodberg	1.0
7. Marinovich	1.0
8. Peace Drive	1.4
9. River	1.4
10. River "mini"	0.3
TOTAL	9.0
Neighborhood Parks	Size (Acres)
11. Callaghan	2.7
12. EA Hall School Site	10.0
13. Joyce/McKenzie	2.0
14. Starlight School Site	3.0
TOTAL	17.7
Community Parks	Size (Acres)
15. Pinto Lake	78.5*
16. Ramsay	32.1
TOTAL	110.6
Urban Open Space	Size (Acres)
17. Memorial	0.2
18. Melwood "Walk-Through"	0.2
TOTAL	0.4
TOTAL PARK ACREAGE	137.7

* 70 acres of water surface plus 8.5 acres of land area.

Source: Parks and Open Space Master Plan, 1992

RECREATION SERVICES

The Recreation and Parks Department provides a variety of recreation services, including athletic, cultural, and educational opportunities at City-owned parks and recreation facilities.

The Watsonville Youth Center, located in the central business district, provides indoor facilities for youth aged 6-17 years. The Watsonville Community Center, located at Marinovich Park, is utilized for youth and adult activities and is available to the community for rental use. The Watsonville Senior Center is

leased to the Association of Watsonville Area Seniors, Inc., an organization providing comprehensive services for senior citizens, including a congregate meal program. The City also encourages the use of City-owned facilities by youth-serving non-profit baseball, softball, and soccer groups.

In addition to City-owned facilities, the Recreation and Parks Department utilizes facilities of the Pajaro Valley Unified School District, including jointly developed school-parks such as EA Hall Middle School and Starlight Elementary School, the

Figure 8-2 Watsonville Parks Definitions

Park Type	Size (Acres)	Service Area	City Standard of Park Acres per 1,000 Population
Vest Pocket	1/2 – 2	1/4-mile radius	2
Neighborhood	2 – 10	1/2-mile radius	
Community	20+	Citywide	3 ¹

¹ Includes Community Parks and Special Use Facilities

Source: Parks and Open Space Master Plan, 1992

Figure 8-3 Population Projections and Park Acreage Requirements

	Population	Current City Standard of Park Acres per 1000 Population	Total Park Acreage Required to Meet Standard	Current City Park Acreage ¹	Additional Required to Meet Standard
1990	31,099 ²	5	155	67	88
2005	50,500 ³	5	253 ⁴	67	186

¹ Includes Starlight and EA Hall Schools. Does not include surface water at Pinto Lake.

² Based on 1990 City limit.

³ Based on 1990 City limit plus land within the urban limit line.

⁴ 101 acres of vest pocket and neighborhood parks and 152 acres of community parks

Source: Parks and Open Space Plan, City of Watsonville, 1992

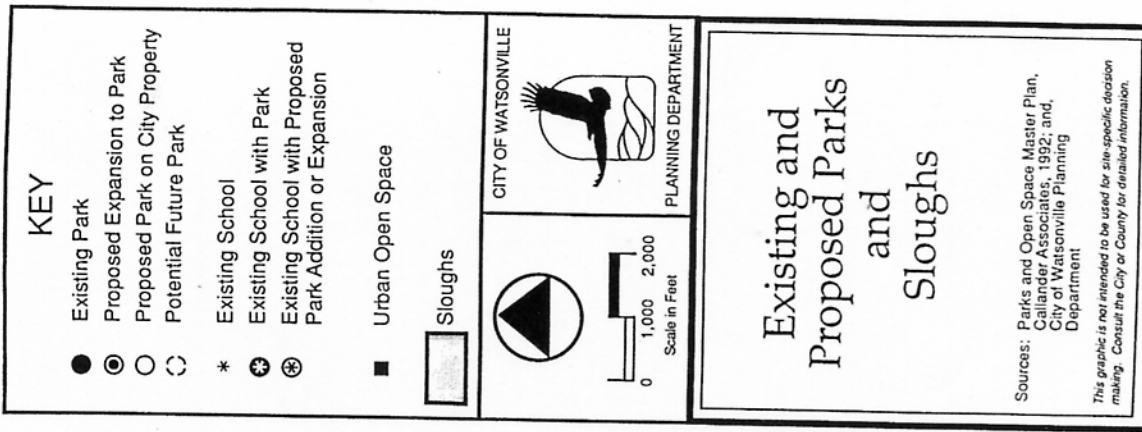
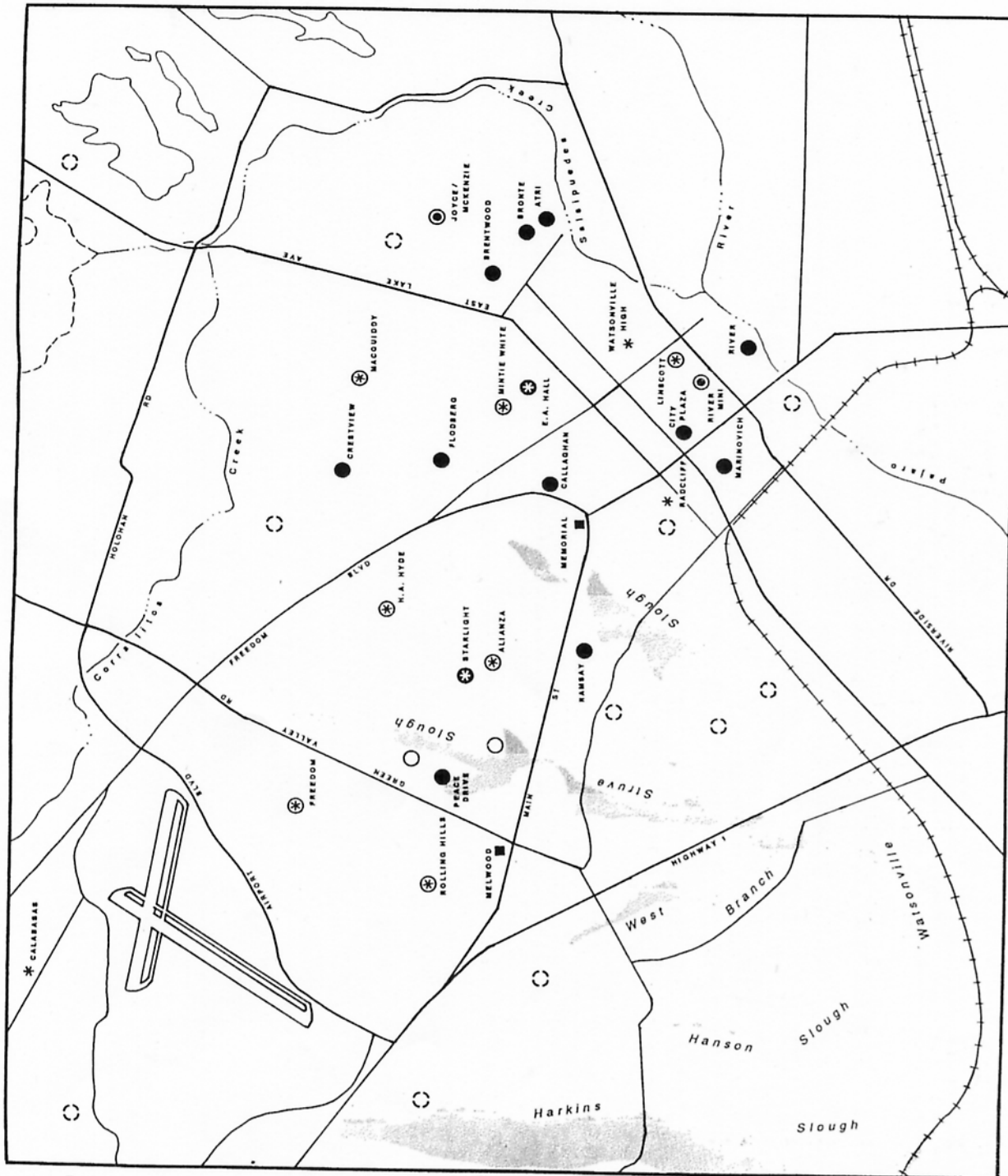


Figure 8-4

Watsonville High School swimming pool, and various school gymnasiums.

The Watsonville area contains a large proportion of very young children, youth, and senior citizens. Their leisure time and recreational activities are a priority concern to the City.

GOALS FOR RECREATION AND PARKS

The community's strong interest in parks and recreation is supported by the following goals:

Goal 8.1 Community Needs

Enhance the quality of life by assuring the provision of services, programs, and facilities that reflect the leisure needs and desires of the community.

Goal 8.2 Facilities

Provide a full range of park and recreation facilities including active recreation areas, passive natural open spaces, and a bicycle/pedestrian trail system.

Goal 8.3 Park Distribution

Provide an areawide distribution of neighborhood parks consistent with the 1992 *Parks and Open Space Master Plan*.

Goal 8.4 Recreation Programs

Provide a comprehensive program of recreational services for all ages, with emphasis on programs for children and youth.

POLICIES AND IMPLEMENTATION MEASURES

The policies for parks and recreation serve to implement city standards for these services which are used on an areawide basis.

Policy 8.A Recreation and Parks Planning

The City shall plan for park and recreation needs in coordination with the Pajaro Valley Unified School District, Santa Cruz County, and other groups to meet the demands of the growing population.

Implementation Measures

Measure 4.E.1 (page 64) also addresses this policy.

8.A.1 Parks and Open Space Master Plan – The City shall consult the 1992 *Parks and Open Space Master Plan*. The City shall consider the adoption of the 1992 *Parks and Open Space Master Plan* accepted by the Council in 1992.

8.A.2 Support Groups – The City shall cooperate with and encourage the formation of resident support groups for the purpose of fund-raising, special events, resident participation, and program design.

8.A.3 County Coordination – The City shall consult with and advise Santa Cruz County and Monterey County on the development of parks, recreation facilities, and a trail network to serve the Watsonville area.

8.A.4 Passive Open Space – The Recreation and Parks Commission shall use the adopted policies for Environmental Resource Management to protect the passive open space provided by the riparian corridors along Corralitos Creek, Salsipuedes Creek, the Pajaro River, and the wetland areas of Watsonville, Struve, and West Branch Struve Sloughs.

Policy 8.B Park Acquisition and Development

The City shall designate sites for future parks and recreation facilities and shall continue to finance, acquire, and develop park facilities consistent with the Watsonville park standards and in proportion to population growth in Watsonville.

Implementation Measures

8.B.1 Park Development Priorities – The City shall consult the 1992 *Parks and Open Space Master*

Plan phasing recommendations and prepare an annual parks and recreation development priority list for implementation.

- 8.B.2 Financing – The City shall investigate the use of park and recreation impact fees, federal and state grants, assessment districts, property transfer tax, private donations, general fund, redevelopment agency, joint projects, general obligation bonds, user fees, concessions, corporate sponsorship, non-profit foundations, public private partnerships, transfer of development rights, alternative acquisition techniques to finance park site acquisition and facilities development.
- 8.B.3 Land Dedication – The City shall require that residential subdivisions dedicate land area to the City for open space and park and recreational use or pay proportional park in-lieu fees. The land area for parks shall serve the immediate and future needs of the residents of the subdivision. The amount of land shall be determined pursuant to the standards and formula specified in the municipal code.
- 8.B.4 Park In-Lieu Fees – All residential, commercial, and industrial projects shall be subject to park in-lieu fees established by City Council resolution.
- 8.B.5 Gift Fund - The City shall establish a tax-deductible gift fund for solicitation of donations of land, monies and equipment for park and recreation purposes. Solicitation methods may include specific facility or equipment requests, gift catalog development or merchandise sales.
- 8.B.6 Park Development – The City shall, in consultation with the Pajaro Valley Unified School District, plan for the acquisition and development of additional school sites and new park facilities suitable for multi-purpose recreational use.
- 8.B.7 On-Site Private Recreation Facilities – The City shall use the development review process to ensure that new residential, commercial,

and industrial development projects provide on-site recreational facilities for the use of residents and employees.

- 8.B.8 Private Development – The City shall encourage and facilitate the development of outdoor sports and recreational facilities by private organizations.

Policy 8.C Park Development Criteria

While recognizing the need for all types of park facilities, the City shall focus park development at the neighborhood- and community-serving level.

Implementation Measures

- 8.C.1 Park Criteria – The City shall plan for and implement a network of parks and recreation facilities at the rate of 5.0 acres per 1000 persons distributed as follows: 2.0 acres per 1,000 persons of neighborhood and vest pocket parks, and 3.0 acres per 1,000 persons of community parks and special use facilities.
- 8.C.2 Neighborhood Park Size – The City shall plan for neighborhood park facilities with a planned size of two to ten acres.
- 8.C.3 Service Area Criteria – The City shall plan for and implement a network of neighborhood and vest pocket park facilities. Neighborhood parks have a 1/2-mile service area and vest pocket parks have a 1/4-mile service area.
- 8.C.4 Vest Pocket Parks – The City shall undertake the development of new vest pocket parks (one-half to two acres) only when land is not available to develop larger parks.
- 8.C.5 Community Parks – The City shall plan for the development of at least two or more Community Park facilities with a minimum of 20 acres. The eventual location of these facilities shall take into consideration land use policies, projected population growth, the need to relieve overuse at Ramsay Park, provision for active night use, and the location of additional high school sites.

- 8.C.6 Trails and Paths – The City shall plan for, and coordinate, the development of a network of pedestrian and bicycle trails to connect city and county park and recreation sites.
- 8.C.7 Tot Lots – The City shall use the development review process to ensure that new residential subdivisions of five or more units provide safe play areas for children of pre-school age (one to five).
- 8.C.8 Park Design – The City shall consider ease of maintenance and water use efficiency in park design. Installation of dual water systems shall also be considered.

Policy 8.D Recreation Programming

The City shall direct the Recreation and Parks Commission to plan for and facilitate community needs for recreation programs and leisure services.

Implementation Measures

- 8.D.1 Annual Review – The City shall annually review recreational services, including after school care, to determine the levels of accessibility, public information/participation, and specialized needs of its residents during the annual budget review process. The special needs of children, youth, families, the elderly, and other special needs populations shall be considered as part of this evaluation.
- 8.D.2 Facility Use Fees – Where appropriate, the City shall use a park facilities fee system to help fund the operations, maintenance, and programming budget for park facilities.
- 8.D.3 Scholarship Fund – The non-profit corporation, Watsonville Park & Recreation Advocates, shall govern a “scholarship program” to provide funds for low-income families enrolling in recreation activities.
- 8.D.4 Alternative Recreation Programs – The City shall consider alternative recreation programs in neighborhoods with park deficiencies, such as providing basketball equipment to private groups, using church and commercial center facilities, and closing streets to through traffic.
- 8.D.5 Community Awareness – The City shall work with community organizations and local media services to ensure adequate public awareness of available recreation opportunities.
- 8.D.6 Communication – Whenever possible, the City shall publish recreation literature in both English and Spanish.
- 8.D.7 Youth Consultation – The City shall maintain an open-door policy for the advice and suggestions of young people in recreation programming. Opportunities for youth leadership programs that empower youth and promote the development of self-esteem shall be developed.
- 8.D.8 Park Clean Up – Encourage participation by league sports in: park clean up after games, general maintenance, and site development.
- 8.D.9 Environmental Education – Develop an environmental education program to encourage appreciation of Watsonville’s natural resources to include:
- a. development of trails, interpretive signs, and overlooks at public parks that are adjacent to sensitive environments
 - b. encouragement of private environmental organizations to sponsor wetlands enhancements programs, and to provide docents for wetlands tours
 - c. coordination with the School District to use specified areas as outdoor learning laboratories.
- 8.D.10 Community Gardens – Consider implementation of a community garden program. Undeveloped land that is being held for future use by the city is one example of land that could be used for community gardens.
- 8.D.11 Summer Programs – The City shall encourage summer recreation programs for Watsonville youth. One example is to pursue

with State Parks a "junior lifeguard" summer program for Watsonville youth at Palm State Beach.

8.D.12 Cultural Education – Recreation programs, where possible, shall be designed to enhance understanding and appreciation of the cultural diversity of Watsonville.

8.D.13 Access for Disabled – The City shall ensure access for the disabled to city parks.

Each of the policies for Parks and Recreation serve to implement one or more goals. This policy-to-goal association is shown in the form of a matrix.

Recreation and Parks Goals and Policies

		Policies			
		8A	8B	8C	8D
Goals	8.1	•	•	•	•
	8.2		•	•	
	8.3			•	
	8.4				•



Sports enthusiasts play basketball at Peace Park, one of 16 public parks that serve the Watsonville area population.